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GRADUATE SCHOOL

Dissertation

ROBERT HERRICK: A LYRIST OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

by

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(Th.B., Gordon College, 1937; B.D., Gordon College, 1940)

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
1943

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# THE LITERATURE OF THE AMERICAN WEST

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THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES  
A. The first part of the history of the United States is the history of the colonies. The colonies were founded by Englishmen who had come to America in search of a better life. They were at first dependent on England for everything they needed. But as they grew in number and power, they began to demand more and more independence. They wanted to make their own laws and to elect their own representatives. This led to a series of conflicts with England, which finally resulted in the American Revolution. The colonies declared their independence in 1776 and fought a war to win it. In 1781, they won the Battle of Yorktown, and in 1783, England recognized their independence. The new nation was then faced with the task of creating a government. The first step was to write a constitution. This was done in 1787, and the new government was established. The first president was George Washington. He served from 1789 to 1797. During his term, the new government was faced with many challenges. One of the most important was the issue of slavery. The new constitution gave the federal government the power to regulate commerce with foreign nations and to establish a uniform rule of naturalization. This led to a series of conflicts between the federal government and the states. The states wanted to keep the power of regulating commerce and naturalization in their own hands. This led to the famous case of McCulloch v. Maryland in 1819. The Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice John Marshall, ruled in favor of the federal government. This decision established the principle of federal supremacy. It meant that the federal government was the supreme law of the land. This decision was a landmark in the history of the United States. It established the federal government as a powerful and independent entity. It also established the principle of federalism, which is the division of power between the federal government and the states. This principle has been a cornerstone of the American system ever since.

V

VI

VII



### Purpose and Methods of Thesis

Robert Herrick was born in London in golden Cheapside, August 24, 1591, in a time when the nation was singing and full of gayety. His day began at the time of the golden age of dramatic literature of Shakespeare and Jonson. The close of his life came when pure songfulness and beauty of expression were falling away.

The story of his life unfolds to a large extent in Hesperides, for which he is remembered to this day. In his poetry we see him as a country boy with a divine fire in his soul, living a happy childhood among the wonders of nature, and as a youth apprenticed to his uncle William, the goldsmith to the king. Knowledge gained during his stay with his uncle finds expression in his poems as; for example, some to Julia in which he writes of the ivory of her neck, a bracelet of beads, lips like rows of rubies, and her teeth, quarries of pearls. From 1613 to 1620, he is a carefree, genial, good-hearted student of Cambridge where he makes a host of friends as well as being imbued with a love for the classics. Later, he visits with the "Sons of Ben" at several literary clubs in London, seeking the inspiration they offer to an interested bystander. In 1627, he serves as a chaplain with Buckingham against the French. From there he goes to Devonshire in 1629, living

## History and Biography of Keats

John Keats was born in London in Golden Square, August 31, 1795, in a time when the nation was sinking and full of gloom. His day began at the rise of the golden age of dramatic literature of Shakespeare and Jonson. The story of his life seems when first introduced and beauty of expression were falling away.

The story of his life unfolds to a large extent in Keats's for which he is remembered to this day. In his poetry we see him as a country boy with a divine fire in his soul, living a happy childhood among the wonders of nature, and as a youth apprenticed to his uncle's shop, the goldsmith to the King. His early years during his stay with his uncle show expression in his poems are for example, some of which in which he writes of the ivory of her neck, a paradise of beauty, like the tower of amber, and her teeth, diamonds of beauty. From 1812 to 1815, he is a poet, genial, good-hearted student of poetry, where he makes a host of friends as well as being inspired with a love for the classics. Later he visits with the "sons of men" at various literary clubs in London, seeking the inspiration that often he has longed for. In 1817, he returns as a scholar with much money earned the year. From there he goes to Devonshire in 1818, living



at Dean Prior and serving in the capacity of a country clergyman: writing and polishing his poetry, hurling hymn books at inattentive heads, until ejected by the Puritans in 1647, only to return in 1662 where he dies in October, 1674.

Herrick has left two volumes of verse with us, Hesperides, the collection of his secular poems, reputed to be his finest; and Noble Numbers which contained his religious poetry. These works were published in London when he was ejected from Dean Prior. According to the title pages the religious poems appeared in 1647 while the secular poems came in 1648. Their appearance in the bookstalls of England did not excite much attention in his day, nor in the period of the Restoration when "solid stuff" set the literary fashion. It took the editors and commentators of the nineteenth century to exhume the works of Herrick for their pure lyrical quality and draw the attention of the world to them.

Hesperides is a story of a long and happy period in the author's life. It is an account of his friendships, his interests in nature and events, and his love--real or imaginary. The atmosphere is youthful, genial and pleasant. It is not tinged with political hatreds or emotions. For this reason, Mrs. Easton calls her work on Robert Herrick Youth Immortal.

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1694.

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teenth century to examine the works of Swift for their pure  
lyrical quality and draw the attention of the world to them.  
Unpublished is a story of a long and happy period in the

author's life. It is an account of his childhood, his  
interests in nature and events, and his love-relationship on land-  
scape. The atmosphere is peaceful, genial and pleasant. It  
is not tinged with political hatreds or emotions. For this  
reason, Mrs. Weston calls her work as Robert Swift's Young

Unpublished.



"There is no one who does not rejoice  
in the beauty and freshness of youth.  
Hesperides is the very 'fountain of  
eternal youth.'"

Noble Numbers, which has received much criticism, is a record of his conception of religion. Many commentators have sought to find out whether or not Herrick is religiously sincere. Moorman suggests that he has not matured spiritually; others remark that his ideas of religion are mediaeval and sensuous. Whatever may be the final evaluation, it must be said that Noble Numbers deserves a place among the English religious poetry.

The presentation which follows is an attempt to make a simple, worthwhile examination of a great -- perhaps the greatest -- lyrical writer of the seventeenth century. Two chapters have been inserted, one on the lyric and the other on the lyrical poetry of the Renaissance, for the purpose of preparing one toward a just and fair appreciation of the qualities of Herrick's Hesperides and Noble Numbers.

The method used is mainly one of comparison. Robert Herrick called himself a "Son of Ben, sealed of that tribe." Therefore, it is only natural that a study be made of these two men. He was a devoted student of the classics, especially of Rome; hence, it is only fair that we examine

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Herick called himself a "Son of Man," and of his "line."

Therefore, it is only natural that a study be made of those

two men. He was a devoted student of the classics, and

especially of Herick's poetry. It is only fair that we examine



their influence on him. I have read and received inspiration from authors who have written essays or books on "Robin" Herrick. Through the reading of a great deal of Herrick's art, I have tried to catch the spirit of the man and the delicacy and sweetness of his pieces. Furthermore, I have been interested in the great variety of themes he employs.

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## CHAPTER I

### DEFINITION OF THE LYRIC

The primary conception in the term "lyric" is that it has to do with song. It is the song-like quality of the lyric that marks its difference from the epic or telling-quality of narrative verse. This idea of song remains with the lyric even to this day although it is true that the modern lyric is not recited to the accompaniment of the lyre as in Aristotle's day. The emotional effect of music emanates from the sound of a phrase, the suggestion of a word, or from the mere connotation of ideas. The imagination supplies the physical effect. The ear, therefore, remains the best test of a good lyric, and not the eye.

The lyric concerns itself with feeling. Very often a poet reveals himself simply because his lyrical pieces express his thoughts, his emotions, his moods, and his passions. For that reason the lyric may be very personal. Much of Robert Herrick's inner self and feeling finds expression in Hesperides, his greatest work. Wordsworth says that the definition of poetry is a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings. That applies to the lyric exactly.

Of course, the lyric is not the only kind of poetry dealing with human emotions. Close beside it stands the

## CHAPTER I

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drama with its picture of complex human life and passion in action and interaction. However, the lyric concerns itself with passion and emotion in their simplicity, rather than in their complexity. When a person details more story than is sufficient to make plain the situation out of which the emotions of the piece arise, it is no longer a lyric but an epic or narrative poem. Beowulf, like Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, is an epic. If the poem involves a conflict on character, the poem is then dramatic. Simply stated, the distinguishing features of the lyrical poem are these: simplicity, brevity, and sweetness. It is not weighed down by a series of complexities; rather, it is delicate, fragile, and not overwrought with forebodings.

We have said that the lyric is personal or subjective ordinarily. Occasionally the poet may project his personality into the person of another and speak and feel unerringly as that person feels and thinks. It is still a lyric. The most dramatic form of a lyric in which the poet makes use of other characters to express his emotion is in Scott's song, Proud Maisie is in the Wood.

The lyric has unity of subject matter. It revolves on one thought, feeling, or emotion. Action, mixed motives, detailed descriptions are not the qualities of the lyric. Concentration, unity of form, and subject produce it.

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As for its permanency, the lyric never ceases in its appeal. It is not a work limited to one specific period; rather, it is universal. The reason is in the nature of its contents. The whole gamut of emotion and feeling constitutes the range of it: wit, sadness, love, rejected love, and fancy. The Elizabethan lyrics are saturated with emotion: such material as this never dies. As long as mankind has its emotions, whether they be radiant or sorrowful, the lyric has permanency.

In contrast, consider satirical poetry. A satire generally arises out of its times and deals with some particular vice or folly characteristic of that age. Hence, it often dies with the end of the period concerned. Also a satirical poem, to give full enjoyment, must often be read with the aid of notes for clarity and understanding. The lyric survives whereas satirical verse may die. The only case where a lyric may lose its chance of eternal life is when it goes beyond the proper limits, becoming didactic or ethical. As soon as this occurs, the tendency is that it will die for it loses the universal properties.

This couplet of Herrick called To His Booke is true of the best lyrics.

"Thou art a plant sprung up to wither never,  
But like a Laurell, to grow green forever." 1

1 Herrick, R.: The Poetical Works: edited by F. W. Moorman  
Page 98 - "To His Booke"





## CHAPTER II

### THE LYRIC OF THE ENGLISH RENAISSANCE

To appreciate the qualities of Herrick and his Hesperides it is necessary first of all to know something of the development of the English lyric and also the differences of form and temper as we pass from the sixteenth-century lyric to that of the seventeenth.

Some contend that the seventeenth-century lyric shows a definite falling away of the splendid harmonies of the Elizabethan era. Mr. Schelling in his book, A Book of Elizabethan Lyrics, says that when we reach the Stuart kings "the golden summer of the English lyric is on the wane." 1 Mr. Swinburne in his preface to Herrick's poems expresses the opposite point of view by saying:

"It is singular that the first great age of English lyric poetry should have been also the one great age of English dramatic poetry; but it is hardly less singular that the lyric school should have advanced as steadily as the dramatic school declined from the promise of its dawn. Born with Marlowe, the drama rose at once with Shakespeare to heights inaccessible before and since and forever,

1. Schelling, F.A.: A Book of Elizabethan Lyrics, Pg. 33

## CHAPTER II

### THE IRISH IN THE ENGLISH RENAISSANCE

To appreciate the position of Ireland and its  
history it is necessary first of all to know something  
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"It is a mistake to think that the first three ages  
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at once with Shakespeare to heights in-  
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to sink through bright graduations of glorious decline to its final and beautiful sunset in Shirley; but the lyrical record that begins with the author of Euphues and Endymion grows fuller if not brighter through a whole chain of constellations till it culminates in the crowning star of Herrick." 1

Expressions as divergent as these call for an examination of the lyric of the English Renaissance and a fair weighing of evidence for and against the theory of decadence.

The Elizabethan lyric was first presented to the public in the popular collections of the day known as Miscellanies. The first printed collection of this kind, Tottel's Miscellany, which appeared in 1557, is usually reckoned as the starting point of the great lyric era; for in this Miscellany appeared the names of two men, Wyatt and Surrey, who gave direction to our modern lyric. The Elizabethan critic, Puttenham, writes:

"In the latter end of the same king's raigne (Henry VIII) sprong up a new company of courtly makers, of whom Sir Thomas Wyatt the elder, and Henry, Earle of Surrey, were the two chieftains, who having travailed into Italie, and there tasted the sweete and stately manner and stile of the Italian poesie,.....they greatly polished our rude and homely manner of vulgar poesie from that it had been before, and for that cause may justly be said the first reformer of our English metre and stile." 2

1. The Works of Robert Herrick Vol. I and II Edited by Alfred Pollard with a preface by A. C. Swinburne Pg. 1
2. Schelling, F.: The English Lyric Pg. 37, Chapt II





As a matter of fact, Surrey never visited Italy but Wyatt did. To Wyatt we owe the introduction of the Italian sonnet, the Petrarchian, into English literature. To Surrey we are indebted for the modification of this form, called Shakespearean, English, or Elizabethan sonnet, to accord with English metrical traditions.

The songs and sonnets of Wyatt and Surrey are of a Petrarchian quality. They deal with the complexities of love and the singing note of emotion which has since enriched our literature with some of the loveliest lyrics ever written. Their own work has artistically no comparison with what presently succeeded it. They were forerunners. They prophesied better things. Their elegies are easy and flowing, their songs graceful, their sonnets, especially Surrey's, remarkable for the daring with which real scenes and persons are introduced. Wyatt is sometimes a little weighted down by the remnants of mediaeval vocabulary and movement, and his ear is uncertain at times. We must acknowledge, however, that these courtly makers did a great work in bringing to English poetry new form and content. The publication of the work of these two poets did much to popularize the new style of writing and with that year the Elizabethan period may conveniently be said to begin.

As a matter of fact, Murray never visited Italy but

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been said to begin.



For the first twenty years of the queen's reign, English literature was apparently stationary in its character, unadorned by masterpieces, and oblivious of distinction and style. Translations were quite numerous, both in prose and verse. Verse forms were being tried, but the effects were often childish and pedantic.

"Poetry was an eager request during these years but the performance was not ready to begin; the orchestra was tuning up." 1

With the year 1580, the daylight of Elizabethan literature was pouring in like a flood and the lyric chorus was in full throat. The inventive fancy of an age seeking for expression hit on certain literary modes. In the lyric, the pastoral was the favorite mode up to 1590, when it was superseded by the sonnet. The former bubbled with joys of an impossible golden age. Its perennial bloom in summer, its pursuing shepherds and shepherdesses, constituted much of the subject matter. With some exceptions, the choicest Elizabethan lyrics and the pastoral mode were gathered into a volume known as England's Helicon, edited by John Bodenham in 1600 and reprinted in 1614. The names of Sydney, Spenser, Breton, Lodge, Peele and others are signed to these poems. The form used in the last decade of Elizabeth's reign (1590 - 1600) was the

1. Gosse, E.: Modern English Literature, Page 77.

For the first twenty years of the century...

English literature was apparently stationary in the

eighteenth century, undisturbed by masterpieces, and oblivious of

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There was an eager interest during these

years but the excitement was not ready

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With the year 1800, the daylight of Elizabethan

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with joys of an impossible golden age. The sentimental

mode is another, the turning of the world into a picture.

constituted each of the subject matter. With some excep-

tions the English Elizabethan novel and the historical

novel were gathered into a volume under the name of

History, edited by John Robertson in 1800 and reprinted in

1810. The names of Dryden, Swift, Johnson, Goldsmith, Burns,

and others are added to these pages. The form used in

the last volume of Elizabethan literature (1800 - 1800) was the



sonnet. The greater number of sonnet sequences, starting with Sydney's Astrophel, were amorous, written to tell with more or less distinctness a story of courtship having its basis in actual fact or pure imagination, sometimes little more than a collection of independent sonnets on the common theme of love.

Along with these two types, a word must be said for the musical poems which flourished from 1588 to 1616. Many of these lyrics were beautiful; the words had a lightness and speed. They were filled with emotion. A large body of these were published under the titles of Madrigals and Airs. The Madrigal, to the English, was a musical form, a particular kind of a song written in parts, while in Italy it referred to a stanza form only. It was written for at least two voices, usually for four or five. It never contained more than one musical movement; therefore, it had shortness and unity of form.

The lyrics of the Elizabethan period are varied in character, but the quality which is common to almost all of them is that of youthfulness. We have here the lyric of a nation in the glory of adolescence, whose movements have a rhythmic grace and whose outlook upon the world is untroubled by care and misgiving. The spirit is carefree, unoppressed with the problems of life, and bubbling with joy.

...The master number of ...  
...with ...  
...more or less ...  
...in actual ...  
...more than a collection ...  
...common theme of love.

Along ...  
...the ...  
...many of these ...  
...lightness and speed. They were ...  
...large body of these were ...  
...The ...  
...a ...  
...a ...  
...in ...  
...written for ...  
...It never ...  
...There it had ...

The ...  
...the ...  
...of these ...  
...of a ...  
...have a ...  
...controlled by ...  
...associated with the ...





The poem, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," is unknown.

Part of the poem, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," is:

"Prufrock is Prufrock's name and Prufrock is Prufrock.  
Prufrock is the name of the man who is Prufrock.  
Prufrock is the name of the man who is Prufrock.  
Prufrock is the name of the man who is Prufrock.  
Prufrock is the name of the man who is Prufrock.  
Prufrock is the name of the man who is Prufrock.  
Prufrock is the name of the man who is Prufrock.  
Prufrock is the name of the man who is Prufrock."

Toward the end of the Renaissance movement we are aware that a conscious recognition of the national character is being made; the history of the nation is being written; the history of the nation is being written. The philosophy of love is now brought from heaven to earth. Being and becoming are no longer primary to emotion. This change of feeling and feeling is the first of all in the history of the nation. Poetry above all else is the first of all in the history of the nation. The change that comes over a nation's thought and emotion. It was John Donne's feeling away from the Renaissance convention who led to the first of all in the history of the nation. Donne's poetry was most original in its attitude and technique. He had a power in analytical presentation and feeling of those involving great rhetorical and rhetorical skill. He never wrote for mere usefulness and was indifferent to the conventional of rhetorical style. His work was realistic and practical and many of them seemed to be the cry of an intense and



passionate soul. It has been said that John Donne was one of the most original minds of the late Elizabethan age.

These new characteristics were carried over into the seventeenth century. Carew, Suckley, Herbert, Crawshaw, and Herrick employ many of these reactionary innovations. We come to know the men of this period more intimately than those of the Elizabethan days. Little information is gathered as to the personality of many of the song writers scattered throughout the Miscellanies.

Besides the innovations of Donne, another influence was seen in the works of Ben Jonson and through Ben Jonson to that of the lyrists of Greece and Rome. Until the end of the sixteenth century the influence of the classical lyric remained subordinate to that exerted by the Italian or Petrarchian. With the work of Ben Jonson we have the opposition of Romanticism and Classical restraint. Spontaneity and simple melody, so characteristic of the Elizabethan Age, are replaced by classical color and compactness of structure. Ben Jonson in his poetry concerned himself with a sense of finish rather than elaboration, with a choiceness of diction, selectiveness of style, with the repression of wandering ideas, and loosely conceived figures. In a word, the manner of Jonson involved classicality. In a later chapter we shall notice the





influence of Ben Jonson especially as related to Robert Herrick.

What conclusion can we arrive at as to the relation of the seventeenth century to that of the Elizabethan Age? What answer can we make to those who speak of this period as the "Autumn of the English Lyric?" It is quite true that the seventeenth century shows the falling off of spontaneity and pure songfulness. Practically every author writing about Elizabethan England acknowledges this fact. There is a decided change certainly in structure and treatment of material. However, in the seventeenth century we have a more thoughtful, more realistic, personal, and intimate lyric and as Moorman says:

"This sense of individuality, the personal note, the lyrical cry of a human soul amid its pleasures and its pain and its hope give their work a touch of modernity, a kingship with ourselves which Elizabethan lyric rarely possesses." 1

Or as Schelling says:

"A consciousness comes into the English lyrical art which was not recognizable before." 2

Simply because Herrick, Herbert, Crashaw, and others come at the end of a long and fertile period of literature

1. Moorman, F. W.: Robert Herrick - A Biographical and Critical Study Page 203
2. Schelling, F.: The English Lyric Page 78





and because a colder and harder poetry followed them does not mean necessarily that the "Decadence," "Autumn," or "Sunset" of the English lyric has arrived. A difference only meant the old order is changing for a new.

and because a slight and better notice followed this fact  
not mean necessarily that the "Reformation," "Luther," or  
"Henry" of the English Reformation was involved. A difference  
only meant the old order is changing for a new.



## CHAPTER III

THE INFLUENCE OF BEN JONSON

Among Herrick's friends in London, Ben Jonson was the first. He was the great Jonson at whose plays the apprentice had marvelled. He was the leader of the literary tribe in London. By many of the other men he was regarded as the "best of poets" and the "rare arch-poet." To his side the younger men flocked, for he seemed an inspiration to them. He was their "Father" as it were, and they were called (and liked it, too) the "Sons of Ben." Devoted and well-deserved homage was paid to him by these younger men.

In the beginning of James' reign, Jonson was one of the club of literary men including Shakespeare, Donne, Beaumont, and Fletcher whose meetings made the Mermaid Tavern famous. Sir Walter Raleigh is said to have founded this club that flourished on Broad Street in Cheapside. Whenever Jonson entered he always brought zest for he had a fondness for criticizing his neighbors. One of his choice habits was that of endeavoring to excite Shakespeare by remarking on his poor acquaintance with the ancients. Perhaps Shakespeare regarded "rare Old Ben" a very troublesome visitor. Ben Jonson, in a poem To the Memory of My Beloved Master William Shakespeare wrote:

"And though thou hadst small Latin and less  
Greek."

CHAPTER III  
THE LITERARY CIRCLE OF NEW JERSEY

Among writers of fiction in London, I am sure was the first. He was the great London of those days. The practice was universal. He was the leader of the literary tribe in London. By many of the other men he was regarded as the "best of poets" and the "true high-poet." To him the younger men looked, for he seemed in imagination to them. He was their "father" as it were, and they were called (and liked it, too) the "sons of Ben." Devoted and well-remembered words were said to him by these younger men. In the beginning of James' reign, Johnson was one of the club of literary men including Shakespeare, Dante, Beaumont, and Fletcher whose meetings made the literary Tavern famous. Sir Walter Raleigh is said to have founded this club that flourished on Fleet Street in Chancery Lane. An older Londoner noted the literary movement next to him a ferment for circulating his publications. One of his chosen habits was that of going every day to see the Shakespeare by remarking on his poor acquaintance with the ancients. Perhaps Shakespeare may have said "O my Ben" very truly some vision. Johnson in a poem "To the memory of Sir Samuel Johnson" writes "O my Ben" very truly. Beloved father William Shakespeare.

"And though you had small Latin and less Greek."



Over the glasses of wine, for chocolate and coffee are later growths of modern civilization, the men would recite their verses to the joy of such younger men as Herrick. As they became flushed with wine, they would even sing their songs. When Jonson recited his verses in the tavern the others were silent. Especially was this so when he presided, in his ripe years, over the Apollo Club at the Devil's Tavern in Fleet Street, for then he was the idol of London and Britain. When his plays and masques were produced, the magic of his name drew a tremendous audience. His influence was felt not alone among his literary friends but also among nobility who patronized the arts; and as these people sponsored him, the wealthy tradesmen gave him their adulation; the middle class caught up his name; the poor repeated it until the name "Ben Jonson" became a byword. Small wonder then that the young apprentice took this man for his pattern and ideal. He was the most conspicuous figure in the intellectual life of the time, a position won by twenty years of prodigious labor and great and varied achievements.

Jonson's greatness was recognized after many years by the laureateship conferred on him by King James in 1616. His reappointment by King Charles in 1630 made him the first official poet laureate of the continuous line to today. Other men had held the title temporarily. Court poets had

Over the Alameda at New York, the chocolate and coffee  
are better grounds of modern civilization. The new world  
recalls their verses to the joy of such younger men as  
Heinrich. As they passed through with wine, they would even  
sing their songs. When Thomas visited his verses in the  
tavern the others were silent. Especially was this so when  
he presented, in his third year, over the Apollo Club at the  
Devil's Tavern in New York. For then he was the first of  
London and Bristol. When his plays and passages were read  
dated, the magic of his name drew a tremendous audience.  
His influence was felt not alone among his literary friends  
but also among nobility who patronized the artist and as  
these people supported him, the wealthy noblemen gave him  
great attention; the noble class caught up his songs; the  
poor regarded it until the name Ben Jonson became a byword.  
Small wonder then that the young generation took this man  
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Jonson's greatness was recognized after many years by  
the immortality conferred on him by King James in 1616.  
His appointment by King Charles in 1625 made him the  
first official poet laureate of the continuous line to today.  
Others may not hold the title temporarily. Court poets had



won the wreath of laurel before, but Ben Jonson was the first officially recognized poet laureate to receive a reward of gold as a yearly stipend. The belief that Jonson actually held and bore the official title is based; first, on the existence of two patents, one dated February 1, 1616, granting him a pension of 100 marks, and the other April 23, 1630, increasing the pension to 100 pounds and adding a tierce (40 gallons) of Canary Spanish wine yearly from the King's cellar; secondly, on his service as a writer of masques at court, these masques being taken as a function of his laureateship; and lastly, on a series of poems addressed respectively to James I and Charles I.

In the face of this evidence however, Gregory wrote:

"This supplementary gift has an exaggerated interest as evidence in support of the legend, still lively, that Ben enjoyed the office of poet laureate and had held it since the grant of his first pension in 1616." 1

There is no question that Jonson ~~was~~ a "brilliant star" in his age. He was a learned scholar, a friend of statesmen, and churchmen as well as poets. His genius and his great heart gathered in all the wits.

Jonson had his first shock of paralysis, though but a slight one, in 1626. Another two years later, a second one left him shaking with palsy and bedridden. In 1637, he

1. Gregory: Ben Jonson page 47





died and for the "Sons of Ben" the death of the master proved a great shock. Society felt that with him the last of a heroic generation had passed away. Verses were poured upon his grave and a sum of money was collected for the purpose of erecting a stately tomb to his memory. The troubles of the rebellion intervened to check that design and Jonson's monument became a plain slab in Westminster Abbey upon which were engraved the words "O rare Ben Jonson." Poets, scholars, and men of fashion sang his praises: "the king of poets", "the English Horace", "immortal Ben", "thriced-honored father", "best of the English poets", "him who can never be forgotten." It was an age of compliments and flattery, and much that was said had a tendency to be superficial and devoid of real meaning. Herrick, however, his greatest admirer, would be honest in his appraisal. Ben Jonson wrote drama and after his death Herrick wrote:

"After the rare arch-poet Jonson died,  
 The sock grew loathsome, and the buskin's pride  
 Together with the stages glory, stood  
 Each like a poor and pitied widowhood.  
 The cirque profaned was; and all postures racked;  
 For men did strut and stride and stare, not act.  
 Then temper flew from words; and men did squeak,  
 Look red, and blow and bluster, but not speak.  
 No holy rage or frantic fever did stir,  
 Of flash about the spacious theatre.  
 No clap of hands, or shout, or praises-proof  
 Did crack the play-house sides or cleave her roof  
 Artless the scene was; and that monstrous sin  
 Of deep and arrant ignorance came in;  
 Such ignorance as theirs was, who onced hissed  
 At thy unequalled play, the Alchemist:  
 Oh fie upon them! Lastly too, all wait  
 In utter darkness, and still will set;

...the name of Ben, the first of the party  
...a great deal...  
...of a heroic...  
...upon his grave and a sum of money was...  
...the purpose of erecting a statue...  
...as the rebellion...  
...and Johnson's...  
...which were...  
...of...  
...of...  
...who can never be forgotten...  
...and history...  
...unparalleled and...  
...his greatest...  
...Ben Johnson wrote...

After the rain...  
The book...  
Together with...  
Each like a...  
The things...  
For me old...  
Then I...  
Look...  
No...  
Of...  
No...  
Did...  
At...  
On...  
In...



Sleeping the luckless age out, till that she  
Her resurrection has again with thee." 1

Another poem and a tribute, perhaps the most familiar,  
Was the Ode to Ben Jonson .

"Ah. Ben!  
Say how, or when  
Shall we thy guests  
Meet at those lyric feats  
Made at the Sun,  
The Dog, the triple Tunne?  
Where we such clusters had,  
As made us nobly wild, not mad;  
And yet each Verse of thine  
Out-did the meate, out-did the frolick wine.

My Ben  
Or come agen:  
Or send to us,  
Thy wits great over-plus;  
But teach us yet  
Wisely to husband it;  
Lest we that Tallent spend:  
And having once brought to an end  
That precious stock; the store  
Of such a wit the world shô'd have no more." 2

Before we can study the influence of Jonson on Herrick, it is necessary to have an understanding of Jonson's poetry. In his lyrical verse especially, we notice first of all a sense of form involving brevity and compactness of expression. There is a feeling on the part of the poet that the effect desired can or may be spoiled by a word too many. Such consideration is not especially true of earlier lyric writers like Spenser. When one reads a poem such as Jonson's courtly compliment to patroness Lucy, Countess of Bedford, one can not but

1. Herrick, R.: The Poetical Works edited by F. W. Moorman page 150
2. Herrick, R.: The Poetical Works page 282





sense concentration of expression.

"This morning timely wrapt with holy fire  
 I thought to forme unto my zealous Muse,  
 What kinde of creature I could most desire,  
 To honor, serve, and love; as Poets use.  
 I meant to make her faire, and free and wise  
 Of great bloud, and yet more good than great;  
 I meant the day-starre should not bright rise,  
 Nor lend like influence from his lucent seat  
 I meant she should be curteous, facile, and sweet,  
 Hating the solemne vice of greatness, pride:  
 I meant each softest virtue there should meet,  
 Fit in that softer bosome to reside.  
 Only a learned, and manly soule  
 I purposed her; that should, with even powers,  
 The sock, the spindle, and the sheeres controule  
 Of destinie, and spin her owne free houres.  
 Such when I meant to faine, and wish's to see,  
 My Muse had, Bedford write, and that was shee."

There is a finish to such poetry, rather than elaboration.  
 It is less continuous and more complete, more solid and  
 substantial, and less dreamy and loose. Simplex Munditiis  
 or Simple Neatness, affords a good example of the balance of  
 phrase and the constrained and controlled element.

Give me a look, give me a face,  
 That makes simplicity a grace;  
 Robes loosely flowing, hair as free:  
 Such sweet neglect more taketh me  
 Than all the adulteries of art;  
 They strike mine eyes, but not my heart."  
 (From Epicoene)

Jonson loved beyond all things to introduce in his  
 lyrics some reference to ancient Rome. He delighted to  
 call into remembrance ancient customs and ceremonies, to  
 talk of Lares and Penates; yet he never forgot that he was  
 an Englishman of the Elizabethan and Jacobean age who  
 satirized beneath classical masques the humors of London life.





It was said of him:

"Father Ben dressed in all the ornaments and colors of the ancients;" "Jonson borrowed boldly from the ancients;" "he represents old Rome to us in its rites, ceremonies, and customs." 1

Jonson had a hearty scorn for the Petrarchians as he was a strict classicist. Felix Schelling said that the characteristics of Ben Jonson were an unusual acquaintance with the literature of Greece and Rome, and a marvelous ability to set his thought into precise and carefully-made molds.

These several qualities affected the literary production of Robert Herrick. Jonson was his poetic father to whom he looked for guidance and suggestion in the composition of his verses. He honored Seldon, Beaumont, and Fletcher, but Jonson seemed to be his favorite above other Caroline poets. Of all Jonson's disciples, Herrick learned more completely the lessons of his master. The classicism of Jonson, consisting of the adoption of much color and atmosphere of Greek and Roman poetry, was from first to last the classicism of Herrick. Even the subject matter of many of Jonson's pieces seem to form the background for some of Herrick's poems.

We may observe the connection between Jonson's famous song, Still to be Neat, (already quoted) and Herrick's Delight in Disorder. Both are the expression of a similar thought.

1. Gregory, : Ben Jonson page 192





"A sweet disorder in the dresse  
 Kindles in cloathes a wantonnesse:  
 A Lawne about the shoulders thrown  
 Into a fine distraction:  
 An erring Lace, which here and there  
 Enthralls the Crimson Stomacher:  
 A cuffe neglectfull, and thereby  
 Ribbands to flow confusedly:  
 A winning wave (deserving Note)  
 In the tempestuous petticoate:  
 A carelesse shooe-string, in whose tye  
 I see a wilde civility:  
 Doe more bewitch me, then when Art  
 Is too precise in every part." 1

The younger poet, taking to heart the instruction of the elder, expressed his delight in the "wilde civility" and "sweet disorder" of women's attire and grew lyrical over tempestuous petticoats that flow confusedly.

Herrick's poem, The Night Piece to Julia, recalls the Song of Patrico in the Gypsies Metamorphosed. Jonson begins:

"The faery beams upon you  
 The stars to glister un you,  
 A moon of light  
 In the noon of night  
 Till the fire drake hath o'ergone you."

and Herrick commences his first stanza:

"Her Eyes the Glow-worme lend thee,  
 The Shooting Starres attend thee  
 And the Elves also  
 Whose little eyes glow,  
 Like the sparks of fire, befriend thee." 2

The stanza arrangement is the same and the thought content similar. The only difference, perhaps, between the two rests in the fact that Herrick is more lyrical and delicate.

1. Herrick, R.: His Poetical Works (page 28)  
 Edited by F.W. Moorman
2. Herrick, R.: His Poetical Works (page 214)  
 Edited by F.W. Moorman





Jonson's lyric, Drink to Me only with Thine Eyes, which is a free translation of a lyric by Catullus, a Latin poet, (84-54 B.C.) tells of a rosy wreath he sends his lady-love.

"I sent thee late a rosy wreath,  
Not so much honoring thee  
As giving it a hope that there  
It could not withered be.  
But thou thereon didst only breathe,  
And sent'st it back to me:  
Since when it grows, and smells, I swear,  
Not of itself but thee." 1

Herrick pays the same compliment, even more delicately in Upon a Virgin Kissing a Rose.

"'Twas but a single Rose  
Till you on it did breathe;  
But since (me thinks) it shows  
Not so much Rose, as Wreathe." 2

Herrick's admiration for his master Jonson shows itself sometimes by imitation, though always with his own genius "touch't". That his work is always his own he claims in Upon His Verses.

"What offspring other men have got,  
The how, where, when I question not.  
These are the children I have left:  
Adopted some; none got by theft.  
But all are touch't (like lawfull plate)  
And no Verse illegitimate." 3

It is only fair to notice as we read Herrick that there is a greater vividness, flexibility, and animation in the

1. Bolwell, R. The Renaissance  
N.Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons 1929 (page 466)
2. Herrick, R.: His Poetical Works (page 51)
3. Herrick, R.: His Poetical Works (page 232)





poetry than in Jonson's work. He owes a debt to the great master for inspiration, but he rises above him artistically.

"His range is wider, his taste surer and we recognize in Herrick the genuine lyric gift of one who sings because he must." 1

Jonson is the schoolmaster, learned, careful, precise, and even heavy at times; whereas Herrick comes by his poetry naturally with more ease and grace. Herrick begins his career by listening to the lyrics of the master in the tavern and theatre. Slowly he catches the spirit of them until he commences to write his own poetry. In time, his verse becomes prolific and circulates in manuscript form. No longer a bystander, no longer a young man listening to his idol, he becomes a lyric poet in his own right, outshining his master. Edmund Gosse, with a word of commendation, says that the level of Herrick's performance is very high when we consider the bulk of it.

1. Moorman F.W.: Robert Herrick: A Biographical and Critical Study page 63





#### CHAPTER IV

#### INFLUENCE OF CLASSICS ON HERRICK

Of all the English poets of the seventeenth century, Herrick was by far the keenest aspirant of the literature of ancient Rome and Greece. His contact with and love for Ben Jonson, along with his educational program brought him into a familiarity with the classics. He studied Latin and Greek and mythology. To him, the classics proved a glorious adventure; rhetoric and logic were a delightful game of wits, while Latin used as a familiar tongue, seemed more pleasant than English. As one reads Herrick's literary production it is easy to see his indebtedness to these ancient poets for ideas and lyric themes, and the readiness with which he enters into the spirit of their poetry. It may be said at the outset that his classicism is to a larger degree Roman than Greek. True, we have imitations of the Odes of Anacreon, and his lyric entitled The Cruel Maid is a free rendering of a portion of Theocritus's Twenty-third Idyll. Among the Hesperides there are six or seven poems which are fairly close translations of Anacreon, Cheat of Cupid, The Wounded Cupid, and others. Some of his sensuous love





lyrics, Vision of Electra, lyrics to Julia, and others are modelled on certain odes of Anacreon. The short, light, and most sensuous lyrics of the volume are, as a general rule, the influence of Anacreon, but he borrows more frequently from Latin authors. Furthermore, the classic color from which his lyrics are so often molded are of Rome and not Athens. Herrick was a "Roman Citizen" and his citizenship seems to have been acquired more easily than Jonson's. Leon Mandel says that Herrick "made himself a Roman citizen" and that "his Roman toga covered an English heart." <sup>1</sup> So deeply is he steeped in Roman literary conventions that he seems to employ them more naturally than he does those of the poets of his own country. In To Live Merrily And Trust to Good Verses Herrick lists the major dieties of his poetic pantheon. The work is pertinent to quote almost fully.

"Now is the time for mirth,  
Nor cheek, or tongue be dumbe:  
For with the flowrie earth,  
The golden pomp is come.

.....

Homer, this Health to thee,  
In Sack of such a kind,  
That it wo'd make thee see,  
Though thou wert ne'r so blind.

Next, Virgil, Ile call forth,  
To pledge this second Health  
In Wine, whose each cup's worth  
An Indian Common-wealth.

1. Mandel, L: Robert Herrick, The Last Elizabethan





"A Goblet next Ile drink  
 To Ovid; and suppose,  
 Made he the pledge, he'd think  
 The world had. all one Nose.

Then this immensive cup  
 Of Aromatike wine,  
 Catullus, I quaffe up  
 To that Terce Muse of thine.

.....  
 Round, round, the roof do's run;  
 And being ravisht thus,  
 Come, I will drink a Tun  
 To my Propertius.

Now, to Tibullus, next,  
 This flood I drink to thee:  
 But stay; I see a Text,  
 That this presents to me." 1

In this piece he mentions Virgil, Ovid, and Catullus, Tibullus and Propertius. Of these men he seems to give great praise to two, Catullus being one--"Then this immensive cup of aromatic wine."

Harrington writes:

"The seventeenth century poet who drank deepest at the fount of Catullus was Robert Herrick whose Hesperides marked the supreme achievement of Renaissance song!"

Lowell, in an essay, says of our poet, "The most Catullian of poets since Catullus."

The other Roman poet of interest to Herrick is Tibullus. He writes, "This flood I drink to thee." From these two men he received many of his ideas and suggestions.

1. Herrick, R.: The Poetical Works of Robert Herrick  
 edited by F.W. Moorman Pg. 80





He does not copy their work, but prefers to adapt, to echo, and to vary. The ode, the epigram, and the epithalamium all come in for their share of adaptation. He drinks from the Latin fountain and writes under its intoxication.

To Catullus, first, we shall look for similarities.. Herrick is impressed by some of the trivialities of subject matter of the Roman poet. Catullus sings of the sparrow;

"Dear sparrow, long my fair delight,  
Which in her breast to lay."

"Sparrow! my nymph's delicious pleasure!"

Not forgetting the sparrow, Herrick sings:

"Of brooks, of blossoms, birds and bowers."

In Hesperides, also, we find a poem under this title, Upon The Death of His Sparrow - Elegie.

The Vivamus Mea Lesbia well maintains in Herrick the claim to be the most popular of the Catullian lyrics for its more or less direct influence in at least half a dozen different products of Herrick's pen. Catullus writes to his Lesbia:

"Let us my Lesbia! live and love  
Though the old should disapprove

.....  
Give me then a thousand kisses  
Add a hundred billing blisses  
Give me a thousand kisses more  
Then repeat the hundred O'er  
Give me other thousand kisses  
Give me other hundred kisses











And Herrick writes:

"Then, even then, I will bequeath my heart  
 Into thy loving hands: For Ile keep none  
 To warme my Breast, when thou my Pulse art gone.  
 No, here Ile last, and walk (a harmless shade)  
 About this Urne, wherein thy Dust is laid," 1

When we turn to Herrick's Epithalamia, or marriage songs, it can be observed that he is inspired by the Catullian models. Moorman says:

"The Epithalamium is one of the most characteristic forms of Renaissance lyric, and one which well meted the temper of Herrick's genius." 2

There are two from Herrick's pen that are beautiful. One celebrates the marriage of Sir Thomas and Lady Southwell; and the other deals with the wedding of Sir Clipseby and Lady Crew. The characteristics of the Catullian Epithalamium-- the songs, the wedding itself, the coming together of the bridegroom and bride in their own home--these are found in Herrick's pieces. Then, too, as Catullus is apt to be sensuous, so likewise is our poet. Making the Epithalamium more Catullian, Herrick loves to dwell upon the mystic rituals of the wedding ceremony; the anointing of the doorpost, the lifting the bride over the threshold, and the scramble for the nuts scattered by the bridegroom. Catullus writes:

"Thy golden-sandalled feet do thou  
 Lift lightly o'er the threshold now!

1 Herrick, R.: The Poetical Works of Robert Herrick - edited by F.W. Moorman Page 73

2. Moorman, F.W.: Robert Herrick - A Biographical and Critical Study





Fair omen this! And pass between  
 The lintel posts of polished sheen!  
 Hail Hymen! Hymenaeus hail!  
 Hail Hymen! Hymenaeus! 1

Herrick remembers that custom in these lines:

"You, you that be of her nearest kin  
 Now, o'er the threshold force her in  
 But to avert the worst  
 Let her her fillets first  
 Knit to the posts, this point  
 Remembering, to anoint  
 The sides, for 'tis a charm,  
 Strong against future harm;  
 And the evil deeds, the which  
 There was hidden by a witch." 2

Because of his interests in the pagan and ceremonial rites,  
 McPeck says of him:

"Herrick, pagan priest, Christian devotee of  
 the banished gods of Rome." 3

The other Latin personality that seems to appeal to Herrick is Tibullus. "To Tibullus next this flood I drink to thee." Tibullus, except for one or two warlike episodes, selects subjects which are peaceful, and the poems which are the chronicle of his life are equally divided between praise of the country and the commemoration of rustic festivals and holidays. He has a love of home and friends, an enjoyment of the country with its hills and dales, of shepherds and sheepfolds, of smiling meadows and murmuring streams, of purple vineyards and yellow cornfields. He is a lover of the rural scene. That is typically true of

1. Cornish, F. W.: Catullus, Tibullus and Pervigilium Veneris
2. Moorman, F.W.: Robert Herrick - A Biographical and Critical Study Page 55
3. McPeck, J.A.S.: Catullus in Strange and Distant Britain-32





Herrick. Rural life and festivals form a large part of Herrick's creative work. The life of Italian peasants and of Devonshire rustics have a similar feature. Both Tibullus and Herrick describe harvest festivals, the offering of the first fruits, rustic dances, eating and drinking. Herrick calls the country home an "Elysium" and his description of that area may have been suggested by Tibullus's description of Elysian fields. In Herrick's Argument of His Book, prefixed to the Hesperides, the fair things of Nature and the associations of country life hold a distinguished place. He begins:

"I sing of Brooks, of Blossoms, Birds and Bowers:  
Of April, May, of June, and July-Flowers.  
I sing of May-poles, Hock-carts, Wassails, Wakes,"<sup>1</sup>

The prominence given to such things in the Argument of His Book is borne out by the verses that follow. Thomas Aldrich says of this particular poem:

"Never was there so pretty a table of contents!  
When you open his book the breath of the English  
rural year fans your cheek; the pages seem to  
exhale wildwood and meadow smells, as if springs  
of tansy and lavender had been shut up in the  
volume and forgotten. One has a sense of open  
lead-set lattices half hidden with honeysuckle;  
the distant voices of the haymakers, returning  
home in the rosy afterglow, fall dreamily on one's  
ear, as sounds should fall when fancy listens.....  
He painted the country life of his own time as no  
other has painted it at any time." <sup>2</sup>

1. Moorman, F.W.: Robert Herrick - His Poetical Works Pg. 5
2. Aldrich, T. B.: The Works of Thomas Bailey Aldrich





This type of material shows the influence of Tibullus as we shall see through parallel quotations. Herrick's A Country Life, to the honoured M. End. Porter contains thoughts strongly reminiscent of Tibullus. Herrick pens:

"Thou never Flow'st the Oceans foame  
To seek, and bring rough Pepper home:" 1

And Tibullus pens:

"Nor seeking gain in unknown lands, had the  
vagrant seaman loaded his bark with foreign  
wares." 2

In the same poem Herrick continues:

"Nor, with the losse of thy lov'd rest,  
Bring'st home the Ingot from the West.  
No, thy Ambition's Master-piece  
Flies no thought higher than a fleece." 3

And Tibullus suggests the idea in:

"May it now be mine to live for myself, to live  
contented with my little, and no more be ever  
avowed to distant merchings." 4

One more illustration from this poem will suffice. Herrick carrying on with his theme "sweet country life" writes:

"There at the Plough thou find'st thy Teame,  
With a Hind whistling there to them:  
And cheer'st them up, by singing how  
The Kingdoms Portion is the Plow." 5

Tibullus says:

"Nor think it shame to grasp the hoe at times  
Or chide the lazzard oxen with the goad." 6

- |        |                |  |                       |
|--------|----------------|--|-----------------------|
| 1,3,5. | Herrick, R.:   | <u>The Poetical Works of Robert Herrick-</u> |                       |
|        |                | edited by F.W. Moorman                       | Pgs. 225 - 6          |
| 2,4,6. | Cornish, F.W.: | <u>Catullus, Tibullus and Pervigilium</u>    |                       |
|        |                | <u>Veneris</u>                               | Tib. I iii l. 39 - 40 |
|        |                |  | Tib. I i l. 25 - 26   |
|        |                |  | Tib. I i l. 29 - 30   |





The same parallelism applies to Herrick's piece, A Country Life: To His Brother, Mr. Thomas Herrick. Consider, for example, the words of Herrick:

"But that which most makes sweet thy country life,  
Is, the fruition of a wife:" 1

With Tibullus:

"What delight to hear the winds rage as I lie  
and hold my love safe in my gentle clasp." 2

With reference to Elizium we have the lines of Herrick:

"Thus let thy Rurall Sanctuary be  
Elizium to thy wife and thee;  
There to disport yourselves with golden measure:  
For seldome use commends the pleasure.  
Live, and Live blest; thrice happy Paire:  
Let Breath," 3

And Tibullus speaks:

"Shall Venus self escort to the Elizium fields  
There never plays the dance. The birds fly  
here and there fluttering sweet carols from  
their slender throats." 4

The Hock Cart or Harvest Home, one of Herrick's best-known poems on country life, has much of the flavor found in Tibullus. In fact, the main elements of both are the same. We notice in both, the thanksgiving and religious devotion, the feast with its eating and drinking, and the general merriment. Perhaps several quotations may show the relationship of each. Herrick writes:

"Come Sons of Summer, by whose toile,  
We are the Lords of Wine and Oile:

1,3. Herrick, R.: The Poetical Works of Robert Herrick -  
edited by F.W. Moorman Pgs. 35, 38

2,4. Cornish, F.W.: Catullus, Tibullus and Pervigilium Veneris  
Tib. I, 1 1: 45 - 46  
Tib. I, 3 1: 58 - 60





By whose tough labours, and rough hands,  
 We rip up first, then reap our lands.  
 Crown'd with the eares of corne, now come,  
 And, to the Pipe, sing Harvest home.  
 Come forth, my Lord, and see the Cart." 1

Tibullus writes:

"Come to us, Bacchus, with the sweet grape  
 cluster hanging from thy horns, and Ceres  
 wreath thy temples with the corn ears." 2

It is interesting to notice that "wine and oile" are not  
 English crops and the "eares of corn" refer to "wheat ears",  
 the traditional crown of the Goddess Ceres. Another  
 parallelism follows. Herrick continues:

"Some blesse the Cart; some kisse the sheaves;  
 Some prank them up with Oaken Leaves:  
 Some crosse the Fill-horse; some with great  
 Devotion, stroak the home-borne wheat:" 3

And Tibullus writes:

"We purify the crops of lands in the fashion  
 handed down from our ancestors of old." 4

For the scene around the hearth Herrick says:

"Well, on, brave boyes, to your Lords Hearth,  
 Glitt'ring with fire; where, for your mirth,  
 Ye shall see first the large and cheefe  
 Foundation of your Feast, Fat Beefe:" 5

And Tibullus says:

"Heap Huge logs upon the blazing hearth." 6

For the frolic and merriment with special reference to  
 drinking, Herrick says:

1,3,5. Herrick, R.: The Poetical Works of Robert Herrick -  
edited by F.W. Moorman Pgs. 100 - 101

2,4,6. Cornish, F.W.: Catullus, Tibullus and Pervigilium

Veneris Tib. II, i 1. 3,4

Tib. II, i 1. 1,2

Tib. II, i 1. 23











## CHAPTER V

### A FEW THEMES IN HERRICK'S POETRY

There is, in the poetry of Herrick, a wide assortment of material and themes. One does not tire of reading his work because of the mixture. On the pages of his volume are more than 1400 separate poems; practically all are lyrical and delicate. He has no heavy, oppressive message to give to the world, no strong passion to voice, no massive grandeur of thought, but a perfection and sweetness so purely lyrical that he fails to interest an age of political agitation. Hesperides, or his secular poems, did not attract any attention at the time of publication. It is but one of many collections of poetry given to the world in a few prolific years. After its publication in 1633, it appears to have been forgotten for the next one hundred and fifty years. With the beginning of the nineteenth century a new appreciation for Herrick starts, and since then, many editions of his poetry have been appearing in succession to the present day. It seems incredible that his poetry could rise above his tempestuous day. He is a singing creature alighting on a strange planet. However, singing as he does of flowers in bloom, harvest merriment, and many dainty mistresses, he believes that his verse will live forever.





"Here I my selfe might likewise die,  
 And utterly forgotten lye,  
 But that eternall Poetrie  
 Repullulation gives me here  
 Unto the thirtieth thousand yeere,  
 When all now dead shall re-appeare." 1

We have mentioned in a previous chapter the poems that are written in a pastoral style. He celebrates every season with its accompanying customs, feasts and rural merrymaking. We have poems for Christmas, Easter, May Day, for country dances, and gay festivals. Aside from the social pleasures of the countryside, Herrick finds delight in the fragrance and color of the flowers. He tells how certain flowers first came to be and how they received their color and fragrance. There is the story of the roses becoming red, the violets, blue, and the lilies, white. Here is the story of how violets became blue.

"Love on a day (wise Poets tell)  
 Some time in wrangling spent,  
 Whether the Violets sho'd excell,  
 Or she, in sweetest scent.

But Venus having lost the day,  
 Poore Girles, she fell on you  
 And beat ye so, (as some dare say)  
 Her blowes did make ye blew." 2

Herrick enjoys the odor of spices and aromatics and perfumes. He wants his many live mistresses to be "perfumed ladies." He writes:

1. Herrick, R.: The Poetical Works, edited by F; W. Moorman  
 page 260
2. Herrick, R.: The Poetical Works (page 105)





"How can I choose but love, and follow her,  
Whose shadow smels like milder Pomander  
How can I chuse but kisse her, whence do's come  
The Storax, Spiknard, Myrrhe, and Ladanum." 1

His Vision of Electra is of her in a bed of roses . Herrick is a genius in being able to take trivial things and weave them into delicate pieces. He sees, smells, and enjoys those little things that most poets of his day regard as slight.

There are a number of poems dealing with music as it has an appeal for him. He remarks concerning it: To Musique to becalme his fever, To Musick, to becalme a sweet-sick-youth. Music, according to Herrick, is the queen of heaven, able to tame tigers and charm souls.

"Begin to charme, and as thou stroak'st mines eares  
With thy enchantment, melt me into tears.  
Then let thy active hand scu'd o're thy Lyre:  
And make my spirits frantick with the fire.  
That done, sink down into a silv'rie straine;  
And make me smooth as Balme and Oile againe." 2  
(To Musick)

He speaks of the singing quality of one's voice also:

"Rare is the voice itself; but when we sing  
To the lute or viol, then it is ravishing." 3

and he seems to grow angry when a voice, the singing voice, is out of pitch, as seen in the epigram Upon Comely, a good speaker but an ill singer:

"Comely acts well; and when he speaks his part  
He doth it with the sweet tones of capital art.  
But when he sings a capital psalme, there's none  
can be  
More cursed for singing out of tune than he." 4

1. Herrick, R. : The Poetical Works, edited by F.W. Moorman (page 180)
- 2.3.4. op.cit.pg. 67, 323,





Allarge part of Hesperides centers around his dainty mistresses. Of the poems in the volume, one fourth are love poems, or, two hundred and ninety five of the one thousand, one hundred and thirty. In Herrick's day, the fashion is to write poems of fair ladies, either real or imaginary. None are more delightful than those of Herrick. As one reads the poems it seems that his heart is always in a flutter and his pen in a constant quiver; yet he never marries. If the love poems are a good indication of his temperament it appears strange, indeed, that he never falls in love or marries. Critics for this reason have disagreed over the sincerity of these score or more lyrics. Gosse concedes that Julia is a real person and that Herrick had a child by her. However he flatly says:

"The only comfort of my life  
Is, that I never yet had a wife;  
Nor will hereafter; since I know  
Who weds, ore-buys his weal with woe." 1

2

Miss Hill suggests that of all these mysterious ladies, stately Julia "prime of all;" seem to bear the stamp of reality. Mr. Mandell II, on the other hand, suggests that Herrick in real life enjoys no one and adds that the love poems lack true familiarity. In its last analysis, the answer to the problem lies with the individual student of Herrick. Many of the poems seem to be overflowings of the

1. Herrick, R.: The Poetical Works, edited by F.W. Moorman -page 313

2. Hill, M.E.: The Beauty, Variety, and Sources of Inspiration of Herrick's Poetry pg. 60





poet's heart. Whether they are due to some love interest that came into his life, we cannot ascertain definitely. Some eight ladies, or mistresses, are mentioned besides Julia: Sappho, Anthea, Electra, Myrrha, Corinna, Perilla, Sylvia, Dianeme. Of these, the majority bear Latin names, which is interesting in the light of the previous chapter.

We shall spend a moment with his fairest Julia. He speaks of Julia's lips and lovely hair bundled up in a golden net. Her teeth are as "white as Zenobia's<sup>1</sup> teeth." He comments favorable on her lovely, alluring, and fashionable clothes, embroidered and richly scented:<sup>2</sup> "how sweetly flows that liquefaction of her clothes." He admires her taste in adorning herself with roses and jewels. Her singing to the accompaniment of the lyre has an attraction for him: "a silv'ry voice that melted his heart within him."<sup>3</sup> Julia means so much to Herrick that he makes several requests of her.

"Julia if I chance to die  
Ere I print my Poetry;  
I most humbly thee desire  
To commit it to the fire:  
Better 'twere my Book were dead  
Then to live not perfected." 4

"Julia, when thy Herrick dies,  
Close thou up thy Poets eyes:  
And his last breath, let it be  
Taken in by none but Thee." 5

1. Herrick, R.: The Poetical Works, edited by F.W. Moorman  
page 246
2. op. cit. page 256
3. op. cit. page 22
4. op. cit. page 21
5. op. cit. page 184





Reading the various poems in Hesperides one is attracted to his many friends who are now immortal because of his pen. He writes poems often of his family: To the Religious Shade of His Religious Father, To His Dying Brother, Master William Herrick, Upon His Mistresse Bridget Herrick (a niece). He remembers Sir George Parrie, Mistresse Grace Porter, M. Leonard William, and a host of other men and women. Even a parishioner at Dean Prior stands out pleasantly on the pages of Hesperides:--My Prue, otherwise Prudence Baldwin, the housekeeper who apparently followed him to London on his ejection and who returned with him in 1662. These are friendship poems immortalizing his personal and favorite friends.

Herrick is a Cavalier Poet, and so we have his poems directed to kings and queens. His sympathies are always with the gay court rather than with the dull, sombre Puritan. He does not like the Puritans, and indeed, it is a pleasure when he requests the Divine (Puritan) at Dean Prior to leave in 1662. In the days of his boyhood, his uncle was a goldsmith to the king and also one of the tellers of the exchequer, so we can readily understand Herrick's sympathy for the throne. Herrick believes in the Divine Right of Kings.

"Twixt Kings and Subjects ther's this mighty  
odds,  
Subjects are taught by Men; Kings by the Gods."<sup>1</sup>

1. Herrick, R.: The Poetical Works (F.W. Moorman editor)  
page 12





He also feels that kings do not receive fair commendation for their labors. He remarks in a couplet:

"In this misfortune Kings doe most excell,  
To heare the worst from men, when they doe  
well." 1

Even during the Commonwealth, Herrick did not lose his faith in Kings. He has a tender place for them in his heart, but we can be thankful that he did not allow political sympathies and loyalties spoil his song of "blossoms, bowers, and singing birds." He rises above political agitation -- times transhifting -- to listen always to the singing birds and murmuring brooks.

Another very popular theme in Hesperides is himself. Aldrich says: "A very favorite theme with Herrick was  
2  
Herrick." There are more than twenty-five poems directed to himself. Herrick is an egotist. He gives hints as to his likes and dislikes and illumines his vanity. He longs to be in London among friends instead of being in Dean Prior. He makes several suggestions about the reading of his poetry, and has a word for those who would criticize his work. He gives a picture, as it were, of his personal feelings. He is frank, and so we have his belief in the immortality of his verse. He has faith in his own genius, saying that his verse will live until the great Judgment Day. In Noble Numbers we have this couplet:

"Who will not honor Noble Numbers, when  
Verses outlive the bravest deeds of men." 3

1. Herrick, R.: The Poetical Works (Moorman) page 286

2. Aldrich, T.B. Robert Herrick Vol. 9

3. Herrick, R.: The Poetical Works page 259





Mindful of the fact that Herrick is a clergyman as well as a poet, his convivial verse needs mentioning. In some of his poetry Herrick is not the dignified, austere minister, but rather a joyful bacchanalian reveler. He enjoys merrymaking couples with ~~their~~ shouting and hilarity. His Welcome to Sack (Sherry-Canary Wine), his Farewell to Sack and A Bacchanalian Verse are examples of his geniality. He likes a good time in a hard-drinking day; for drunkenness was a prevailing vice. He recognizes, however, a limit to the habit of drinking for we read in a Hymne to Bacchus:

"Bacchus, let me drink no more;  
Wild are Seas, that want a shore.  
When our drinking has no stint,  
There is no one pleasure in't.  
I have drank up for please  
Thee, that great cup Hercules:  
Urge no more; and there shall be  
Daffadills g'en up to Thee." 1

At times, he wears his cassock lightly, for even tradition tells that while at Dean Prior, Herrick kept a pet pig which was taught to drink out of a tankard.

Before we approach the religious verse, or Noble Numbers, a word should be said for the epigrams scattered through Hesperides. Often these couplets contain great truth and common sense. Most critics, however, regard these pithy epigrams as a blot on the fair page of Herrick's work. Pollard takes the worst of these, placing them in a

1. Herrick, R.: The Poetical Works (F.W. Moorman editor)  
page 122





1

detachable appendix. Granted that many are not very good; nevertheless they should not be overlooked. Furthermore, these epigrams are but a small part that make up this interesting volume. Here is a fine little couplet called Readinesse.

"The readinesse of doing, doth expresse  
No other, but the doers willingnesse." 2

Robert Herrick adds Noble Numbers possibly as he realizes that his Hesperides has an unchurchmanlike tone. This edition perhaps eases his conscience. Many critics regard Noble Numbers, or His Pious Pieces, as inferior and less pleasing when compared with the secular poems. As a whole, they are not so pleasing or lyrical. Many of them lack the imprint of deep religious fervor. One feels that they were the clergyman's Sunday afternoon entertainment. As the quality of these poems are poorer in beauty and lyrical sweetness, they do not require the same attention as Hesperides.

One wonders upon reading these poems whether or not Herrick had deep spiritual emotions. Some commentators opine that he did not experience spiritual emotions. Oftentimes his orthodoxy is tinged with paganism, especially of Rome. His Litany to the Holy Spirit, sometimes used as a hymn, contains a certain amount of humor as well as seriousness.

1. Herrick, R.: The Works of Robert Herrick Vol. I, II  
edited by Alfred Pollard

2. Herrick, R.: The Poetical Works (F.W. Moorman) pg. 268





"In the houre of my distresse,  
 When temptations me oppresse,  
 And when I my sins confesse,  
     Sweet Spirit comfort me!

When I lie within my bed,  
 Sick in heart, and sick in head,  
 And with doubts discomforted  
     Sweet Spirit comfort me!

....      ....      ....      ....      ....

When the artlesse Doctor sees  
 No one hope, but of his Fees,  
 And his skill runs on the lees;  
     Sweet Spirit comfort me!

When his Potion and his Pill  
 His, or none, or little skill,  
 Meet for nothing, but to kill;  
     Sweet Spirit comfort me!

....      ....      ....      ....      ....

When the tapers now burne blew,  
 And the comforters are few,  
 And that number more then true;  
     Sweet Spirit comfort me! 1

The manner in which Herrick addresses Diety in one poem almost takes the breath away. He may not be irreverent in the petition, but it is a strange approach to God, especially for his day.

"Pardon me God, (once more I Thee entreat)  
 That I have plac'd Thee in so meane a seat." 2

His credal position is summed up in a poem called His Creed. He has a God and a belief in immortal life. He is conscious of the deadly power of sin. These beliefs are placed before his congregation and are gratefully learned.

1. Herrick, R.: The Poetical Works (F.W. Moorman editor) page 337
2. op. cit. page 361





"I do believe, that die I must,  
 And be return'd from out my dust:  
 I do believe, that when I rise,  
 Christ I shall see, with these same eyes:  
 I do believe, that I must come,  
 With others, to the dreadfull Doome:  
 I do believe, the bad must goe  
 From thence, to everlasting woe:  
 I do believe, the good, and I,  
 Shall live with Him eternally;  
 I do believe, I shall inherit  
 Heaven, by Christs mercies, not my merit:  
 I do believe, the One in Three,  
 And Three in perfect Unitie:  
 Lastly, that JESUS is a Deed  
 Of Gift from God: And heres my Creed." 1

One of the more familiar poems of Noble Numbers is  
A Thanksgiving to God, for his House. The poem is a  
 tribute to Dean Prior. He seems reconciled to his "cell"  
 at the time of this poem.

Herrick has written several little graces for  
 children which are rather pleasing.

"Here a little child I stand  
 Heaving up my either hand;  
 Cold as Paddocks though they be,  
 Here I lift them up to Thee,  
 For a Benizon to fall  
 On our meat, and on us all." Amen. 2

"What God gives, and what we take,  
 'Tis a gift for Christ His sake:  
 Be the meale of Beanes and Pease,  
 God be thank'd for those and these." 3

The supremacy of Herrick, according to Moorman,<sup>4</sup> over  
 his contemporaries in the field of lyric poetry, is partly

1. Herrick, R.: The Poetical Works (F.W. Moorman editor)  
 pg. 348
2. op. cit. page 354
3. op. cit. page 353
4. Moorman, F.W.: Robert Herrick - A Biographical and  
 Critical Study page 312





due to his wide variety of poems and artistry. Certainly that is true. It is amazing to see how he can write of the alehouse, and then proceed to the harmonies of the classical ode. He can be romantic and classical. He is able to single out little things, making them something of beauty. He has a word for his friends and Faithful Prue, the house-keeper. He can be pagan and Christian appearing sincere and reverent. He writes about death, and yet finds enjoyment in festivals and rural customs. For these several reasons Herrick is assured of immortality through his verse.





## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

Herrick deserves a place among the great lyrists of English literature. His poetry is the voice of springtime, ever new and forever true, everlastingly fresh and revivifying. Although some of the poems are the products of his mature years, as some were written after he had passed his fiftieth year, still they contain a freshness and sweetness. He grows old with age, but his poetry remains youthful.

Hesperides suggest that beauty inspired Herrick from his youth to old age. Nature never ceases to have an appeal. The flowers nodding in the breeze upon the English landscape always hold a message: the violet, the rose, the lily. Fair mistresses attract him, especially their loveliness, the beauty of their clothes, the arrangement of their hair, the choice of perfumes. Music comforts him and he writes about the voice having no singing quality or harmony. Herrick's poetry is not the product of his travel on the Continent. Material for his poetry is, as it were, at his back yard. This simplicity of the rural scene has made Hesperides one of the great lyrical contributions for the world.





The poems of Hesperides are beautifully formed. They have a lilt and liquid flow that bewitch the memory, having once caught it. One is inspired to reread these poems again and again. They are not laborious and heavy as the poetry which follows Herrick's time.

Herrick was correct when he wrote that his poetry would remain as a permanent contribution until the Judgment Day. The odes to his friends, the delicately woven lyrics to primoses and marigolds, the vigorous English pastorals, were wrought with a grace and touch that will be always characteristic of one man in English literature -- Robert Herrick.

"As Shakespeare stands alone in his vast domain, so Herrick stands alone in his scanty plot of ground.

Shine, Poet! in thy place, and be content." 1

1. Aldrich. T.B.: The Works of Thomas Bailey Aldrich  
Vol. 9: Robert Herrick page 148





### ABSTRACT

The primary conception of the term "lyric" is that it has to do with song. The song-like quality remains with the lyric to this day, although it is not recited to the accompaniment of the lyre as in Aristotle's day.

The lyric concerns itself with the thoughts, emotions, and passions of the poet. This is especially true of Robert Herrick. One learns a good deal of the man's inner life and outward struggles through Hesperides, his greatest work. In the lyric the whole gamut of human emotion and feeling is the range: wit, sadness, love, and fancy. These are universal qualities of any age, which means to the poet that the lyric is assured of longevity. Herrick writes that he is confident that Hesperides will be read until the Judgment Day.

The lyric distinguishes itself from many other forms of poetry in that it has unity of subject matter. It revolves about one thought, feeling, or emotion. It is not interested in mixed motives, and complex action, characteristic of dramatic poetry.

Some commentators have said that when Herrick appeared with his poetry, the golden summer of the English lyric was on the wane. Swinburne, however, felt that the lyrical record culminated in Herrick. The reason why men differed was due to the fact that as poetry passed from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century, there was a decided change in





form and character. The Elizabethan age was characterized by youthfulness. The nation was in the glory of adolescence; carefree and exuberant. It was an age of flattery and compliments, and people were little disturbed by problems. Not so with the seventeenth century! This age was marked by a sobering in spirit and temper. It was an age of restraint, and the poetry that was produced concerned itself with the choiceness of diction and concentration of thought. Also, the poetry became more personal -- the cry of the human soul.

Among Herrick's many friends in London, Ben Jonson was the first. He was the "rare Arch-poet". Jonson's influence was felt among his literary friends, and the nobility who patronized the arts. He was a brilliant star. It was to Jonson, therefore, that Herrick turned to for inspiration and suggestion. Jonson had a great love for the classics and employed them freely in his poetry and drama. Herrick did likewise. Herrick imitated Jonson in thought content, as seen for example in Jonson's Still to be Neat and Herrick's Delight in Disorder, although it was with his own genius added. He wrote a poem in which he said that he was not given to plagiarism, but rather adapted and revised. Jonson was the schoolmaster: heavy, careful, and precise. Herrick came by his poetry naturally, with ease and grace. He sang because he had to sing.





Not alone did Herrick receive inspiration from Jonson, but also from the classics. In his To live Merrily and Trust to Good Verses he listed the major dieties of his poetic pantheon: Virgil, Ovid, Catullus, Propertius, Tibullus. Of these men, Catullus and Tibullus seem to stand out as the favorite poets. Concerning Catullus, Harrington wrote that Herrick **alone**, of all the men of the seventeenth century, drank deepest from the Catullian fount. The Latin poet was interested in the simple things, such as the sparrow, as was Herrick. The Vivamus Mea Lesbia theme, characteristic of Catullus, was taken by Herrick for some of his poetry. The Latin poet did honor to his deceased brother in far off Troad, and Herrick paid tribute to his dying brother. The Catullian Epithalamium, with its songs, marriage customs, and homecoming, had its counterpart in Herrick's marriage poems to Sir. Clipseby and Lady Crew and Sir Thomas and Lady Southwell.

The other Latin influence was Tibullus who had a love for the beauties of nature and the village festivals. This attracted Herrick as seen in the Argument of His Book:

"I sing of Brooks, of Blossomes, Birds, and Bowers:  
I sing of May-poles, Hock-carts, Wassails, Wakes,"

These men inspired him, but they did not claim him. He rose above them artistically.

Herrick was a master at using an assortment of themes. On the pages of Hesperides are more than fourteen hundred





separate poems, all lyrical and delicate. He has poems in which he celebrates every season of the year with its accompanying feasts. He has poems that deal with the origin, fragrance, and color of flowers. He has poems about perfumed ladies. He has poems that tell how music calms a fever or a sweet-sick-youth. He has poems about fair mistresses, his favorite being Julia, as forty-four poems are addressed to her. He has poems for his family and friends. His father, brother, and relatives are remembered. A number of poems express his loyalty to the throne. Another popular theme is himself, with some twenty-four On Himself.

Robert Herrick adds Noble Numbers to complete the volume. He possibly feels that Hesperides has an unchurchmanlike tone. Although there are several splendid poems in the volume, it can not be considered on a par with the secular work. Generally, the lyrics are not as sweet and delicate as in Hesperides. Many of the poems lack the imprint of a deep religious fervor. Two most familiar poems of the volume are, Litany to the Holy Spirit, and, A Thanksgiving to God: a tribute to Dean Prior.

The poetry of Robert Herrick will never lose its appeal. He can write about the alehouse and then proceed to the harmonies of the classical ode. He writes about death, and yet gives a Welcome to Sack. Because of the wide variety of themes and his artistry, Hesperides and Noble Numbers will have a place in English literature.





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